

Senate Commerce Committee

Aaron Jones 271-2609

SB 669-FN, relative to on-premises licenses for licensed barbershops and salons.

Hearing Date: February 17, 2026

Time Opened: 10:00 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:23 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Innis, Murphy, McGough, Fenton and Reardon

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Ricciardi

Bill Analysis: This increases the fee for an on-premises license for barbershops and salons, requires the liquor commission to inspect such licensees, and requires the liquor commission to make an annual report to the legislature regarding the issuance of licenses and the number and type of violations which occurred.

Sponsors:

Sen. Perkins Kwoka

Sen. Prentiss

Sen. Murphy

Sen. Pearl

Sen. Ward

Sen. Innis

Sen. Watters

Sen. Rochefort

Sen. Avard

Who supports the bill: Senator Rebecca Perkins Kwoka, Senator Ruth Ward, Senator Daniel Innis, Nathan Riggs (Scuttlebutt Barbershop)

Who opposes the bill: Aubrey Freedman, Pamela Harders, Curtis Howland, James Gardner, Timothy Finney, Jesse Medeiros

Who is neutral on the bill: Matthew Culver (NHLC), Mark Armaganian (NHLC)

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Rebecca Perkins Kwoka

- This bill was filed at the request of a constituent, and it would tweak last year's SB 87.
- Originally, SB 87 established a controlled cocktail service in barbershops and salons. As it made its way through the Legislature, however, it was replaced with a complimentary service permit for \$100 a year. Senator Perkins Kwoka said small business owners do not want to pay for a permit that prevents them from generating revenues from alcohol service.
- This bill would have the same oversight and a limit of 1 drink per client per visit without creating regulatory loopholes.

- Senator Perkins Kwoka said they should support small businesses, while also protecting public safety.
- **Senator Murphy** asked what this bill allowed that was not allowed under current statute.
 - **Senator Perkins Kwoka** said the informal practice of receiving a glass of wine at a salon was protected statutorily in SB 87 until it went over to the House. This bill would revert back to this traditional practice and protect it in statute.
- **Senator Murphy** said the current statute stated, “[the] Commission may issue a license to a business currently licensed through the Office of Professional Licensure and Certification as a salon or barbershop to serve one alcoholic beverage.” If they can be licensed for \$100 to serve a beverage, he asked what this bill would do other than raise the fee.
 - **Senator Perkins Kwoka** said they wanted to have protections in place for age as well as ensuring training is incorporated. It also clarified that the intent was not to open a commercial operation. She agreed that this language largely followed what was in statute, but the other provisions allowed businesses to balance public safety with their current practice.
- **Senator Innis** asked how long it took for an individual to get their hair colored. He said he was focused on the one drink because an individual could be there for an hour or more.
 - **Senator Perkins Kwoka** said it would depend, but it usually takes about an hour.

Nathan Riggs, Owner, Scuttlebutt Barbershop

- Under the oversight of the Liquor Commission, this bill would allow licensed barbershops, salons, and spas to serve 1 alcoholic beverage per adult client during an appointment.
- New Hampshire depends heavily on liquor revenues, but profits have flattened in recent years. Mr. Riggs said this proposed permit would provide a modest, yet practical way to generate new revenue.
- This bill would have safeguards in place, such as mandatory identification card checks, Responsible Beverage Service training, no happy hours or promotions, and no bar-style activity.
- Mr. Riggs said this bill was not meant to cut into the profits of restaurants or bars. These are appointment-based businesses, not nightlife venues. He said the goal was to enhance downtown activity and encourage clients to continue their evening at local restaurants after their appointment.
- Mr. Riggs said this bill took a responsible, revenue positive approach to help support small businesses, the state, and local economies.
- **Senator Murphy** asked if he knew that the law allowed this to be done through a license.

- **Mr. Riggs** said yes, but they cannot sell it. While it is a \$100 fee a year, alcohol is given away. With the possibility of having their insurance costs raised, the adoption rate would be negligible.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

Aubrey Freedman

- Mr. Freedman said this problem has been solved.
- Mr. Freedman asked if the data showed a lot of traffic accidents caused by individuals after they had gone to the salon.
- Mr. Freedman said a 500 percent increase in the fee was not nominal.
- Mr. Freedman said they should support small businesses by reducing red tape and regulations; instead, this bill added training, paperwork, and inspections.

Neutral Information Presented:

Mark Armaganian, Chief of Liquor Enforcement and Licensing, and Matthew Culver, Lieutenant, New Hampshire Liquor Commission

- Last year, Chief Armaganian said the Commission asked for this license type.
- When the industry began to open back up during the COVID pandemic, the Commission had been asked by a couple of salons if they could extend their serving areas outside. Since they were not licensees, Chief Armaganian said it was not possible.
- Chief Armaganian said they wanted to ensure the industry had the proper licensure to do what they wanted to do.
- The Commission worked with the Legislature, but both legislative bodies did not want a high licensure fee, which is why the fee was set at \$100. Compared to the existing law, this bill would increase the fee from \$100 to \$480.
- Currently, there are 7 barbershops with active licenses and there are 17 businesses who are in the process of obtaining licensure.
- This bill would keep in place many of the restrictions from the original bill; however, it would also establish redundant reporting requirements from the Commission.
- Lieutenant Culver said RSA 178:2, I, relative to the Commission's Management Training Seminar, should be referenced instead of Responsible Beverage Service training.
- **Senator Murphy** said Lines 19 through 20 obligated the Commission to perform annual inspections on licensed facilities. He asked if any licensee was inspected annually.
 - **Lieutenant Culver** said the Commission inspects all 6,400 licensees on an annual basis.

- **Senator Murphy** said a previous testifier believed this bill would allow them to sell alcohol, but he asked for clarification because Lines 6 through 7 would still require it to be given away for free.
 - **Lieutenant Culver** said there were different versions of this bill, but this version stated that liquor would be provided for free.
 - **Chief Armaganian** said Representative Hunt's mindset last year was if liquor is free, then businesses would have no incentive to overservice. If businesses gave away too much, they would lose money.
- **Senator Reardon** asked what the training requirement was for a shop owner.
 - **Lieutenant Culver** said the Commission offers different types of training, including the Responsible Beverage Service training, but the legislative mandate has been the Management Training Seminar.
- **Senator Reardon** asked if there were any training requirements for anyone else in the shop.
 - **Lieutenant Culver** said it could be the owner or their designee. There are no requirements for servers to get training, but they offer them many forms of training.
- **Senator Reardon** asked if a trained person always had to be on-site.
 - **Lieutenant Culver** said the requirement was to have a designated person in charge. If an owner designated a manager to attend the Management Training Seminar, they would be designated as the person in charge of being on the premises.
- **Senator Murphy** asked if the Commission has ever cited barbershops and salons for providing alcohol to regular customers.
 - **Chief Armaganian** said not under his administration. Under the criminal code, it is a felony to sell or give away liquor without a license. The Commission felt the best option was to create a license and get businesses into compliance.
- **Senator Innis** asked what the requirements were for a small inn.
 - **Lieutenant Culver** said under existing statute, any business that is registered through the Secretary of State must obtain a license to sell, serve, or handle alcohol. The Commission became aware that many barbershops and salons were serving alcohol without a license, so they were provided with a legal pathway to continue their business model. For Bed and Breakfasts, one license type did not have as many restrictions if only beer and wine were served.
- **Senator Innis** asked if this bill allowed cocktails.
 - **Lieutenant Culver** said that was correct.
- **Senator Innis** asked if there would be more flexibility if this bill were pulled back to just beer and wine.
 - **Chief Armaganian** said that was part of their conversations last year. This issue was complaint based; the Commission did not search for it. The Commission wanted to be a good partner to get businesses in compliance.

They found there were some salons and barbershops that were acting as a cocktail lounge. If they fell within that category, it would create an extra set of rules. He said the unintended consequences would be catastrophic.

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Date Hearing Report completed: February 24, 2026